

Naval War College Review

Volume 33

Number 2 *March-April*

Article 1

1980

President's Notes

Edward F. Welch Jr.

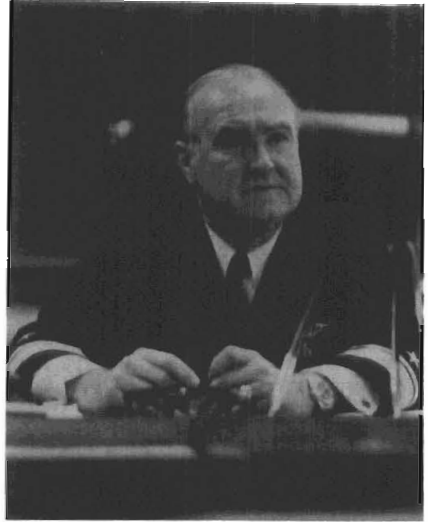
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Recommended Citation

Welch, Edward F. Jr. (1980) "President's Notes," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 33 : No. 2 , Article 1.

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PRESIDENT'S NOTES

The writings of S.B. Luce and those of his successor as president of the Naval War College, Alfred T. Mahan, clearly point to their conviction that naval officers (and for that matter, all officers) should study their profession of arms in the same manner as a doctor or lawyer must study his. To do less is to assume that our Navy can somehow operate with less. The vision of Luce and Mahan is reflected today in our curriculum and our mission; the Naval War College is pointed to the fleet and that is its proper direction.

Luce was an independent, outspoken individual who felt that part of his role as a military man was to participate in Navy decisions and in the formulation of larger decisions regarding the defense posture of the nation. One of the objectives implicit in our program here is to encourage uniformed officers and the civilians of government agencies to participate to the fullest in the national security process, to study the issues and be prepared to contribute their particular knowledge or point of view; for today, as in Luce's time, the separation of decisionmaking into purely "political" or purely "military" categories is a simplistic and dangerous premise (but it is one with which too many military officers feel quite comfortable).

Much of the thinking that rightly should be done by College officials has been taken over by the private sector. The great proliferation of think tanks, defense consultants and others is understandable. They provide an important input to our plans and programs. However, they should not dominate the process. Too often, those in uniform are engaged in reaction to exigencies of the moment (real or fancied) when the national security policy train pulls out of the station. Focusing on all this "busy work" does not allow us sufficient time to carry out what we know (or should know) how to do best—imaginative and innovative thinking about how to use our Navy in the future.

One of the present realities is the constant parade of military experts who do not wear a uniform. In all of the agencies represented in the process of national security policy formulation, there exists a considerable body of expertise on military topics. In fact, it is disconcerting to a military officer to find that his colleagues in an inter-agency group are much better informed than he on military aspects of certain issues. This is sadly true on too many occasions. On the other hand, there are many occasions in which the military officer—who has done his homework and who has developed the necessary professional credibility—not only copes effectively but becomes a leader or at

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least a valued participant in the process. It is very easy to stand apart from the day-to-day negotiating that takes place in Washington, but the results are not as easy to accept and may have serious effect upon military operations.

A case in point is the protracted negotiation on the Law of the Sea. Here the United States has been most ably represented both on the civil and military side. One should consider, however, what could happen if this were not so. For example, draw a 200-mile limit about the nations of the world and see what closure of these areas would do to the flexibility of military operations or agree that nations contiguous to international straits have sovereignty over those sea and airspaces and see what happens when going from A to B. This is but one example of the need for participation by knowledgeable respected military officers in many areas of national security policy formulation.

Our very bright and enormously talented students graduate from the Naval War College armed with the intellectual tools to play an important role in the national security process.

They have a current perspective on Navy thinking, issues, and problems. They know how the various components of Defense and other government agencies relate, and what role they play in Navy decisions. I hope that they will become part of a generation of thinkers who can plan and execute actions across the spectrum of national and service needs. This requires working above the parochial divisions of warfare specialties and enhancing the dedication to the nation that has characterized our Navy for many years and stands above service or job-related divisions.

It is vitally important that none of us loses sight of the fact that the fleet and its use as an instrument of national policy are why Naval War College students are studying for a year under an expert faculty. Luce was committed to that above all else. It makes sense today to adhere to his example.



EDWARD F. WELCH, JR.
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
President, Naval War College